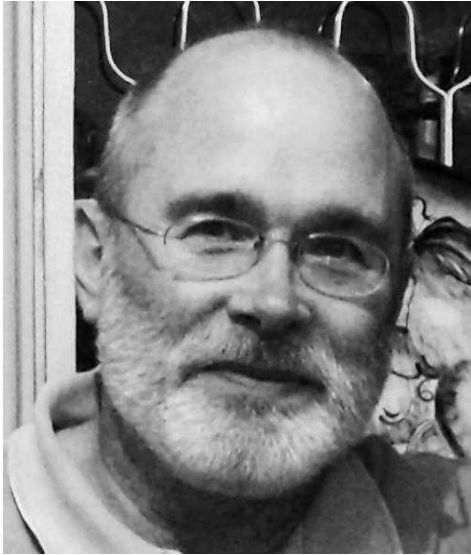


Daniel T. Cerutti (1956–2010)

John Staddon
Durham, North Carolina



Dan Cerutti, Assistant Professor of Psychology at California State University, East Bay, died suddenly on January 10, 2011. He was 54 years old. He is survived by his wife Rosa, young son Gio, stepson Manuel Pena, brother Edward, and sister Cecily.

A graduate of University of Maryland Baltimore County, (BA, 1984) and Temple University (PhD, 1989), Dan taught and researched at an unusually wide range of places before coming to California State University at East Bay in 2007: the University of Minnesota, the Yerkes Primate Center in Atlanta, Davidson College in North Carolina, the National University of Mexico in Iztacala (Mexico City; Dan was fluent in Spanish), and the University of Magdeburg in Germany. After Magdeburg, Dan came to Duke University as a re-

search professor, in charge of the laboratory of John Staddon, from 1998 to 2007.

Some will remember Magdeburg as the site of Otto von Guericke's famous demonstration in 1650 that teams of horses could not pull apart two hemispheres held together by a vacuum. This was just the kind of scientific history that Dan enjoyed and that enlivened his teaching. (Dan's son was named after the 16th century Italian scientific martyr Giordano Bruno.)

Dan's position as an assistant professor is more a testament to his modesty and conscientiousness, and bad economic times, than a true reflection of his stature in the field of behavior analysis. Like von Guericke, Dan was an ingenious and talented experimenter. He was highly adept technically, usually built his equipment from scratch, a skill almost vanished from behavioral laboratories these days, and had an unrivaled ability to devise clever ways of measuring behavior in a wide range of animals, from zebrafish, through pigeons, rats, and bonobos, to humans—although his experience with one famous bonobo was not totally positive, as his friends may recall.

Dan made substantial contributions to the experimental analysis of behavior. At Duke, for example, he was the person responsible for a series of experiments showing that the experimental basis for the popular cognitive pacemaker theory of timing is seriously flawed. Dan's experiments allowed him and his collaborators to devise and test an alternative to that theory. He was also an important contributor to experimental and theoretical studies

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of metacognition in animals. All these experiments built on Dan's earlier work on choice as a student with Charles Catania in Maryland.

With Edward Levin, a colleague at the Duke School of Medicine, Dan devised experimental tests of drug effects on the behavior of zebrafish, a genetically mapped, widely used organism in developmental biology. Dan also devised a simple procedure that showed zebrafish to be capable of extremely rapid timing in a Pavlovian conditioning situation, an ability previously only demonstrated in much higher animals. Dan was also the central figure in a series of studies at Duke on the detection of

land mines. He was able to show that human subjects can use two different sensors, a metal detector and ground-penetrating radar, in a powerfully synergistic way. This work is an important contribution to solving a worldwide humanitarian problem.

Dan Cerutti died when his scientific work was reaching its peak. He was working on new epigenetic behavioral experiments with zebrafish and had two books, one on evolution and another on research methods, close to completion. His unexpected collapse on the campus of CSU East Bay is a devastating loss to his family and a great loss to science. He will be sorely missed.